DEPICTION OF MYTHOLOGICAL WOMAN CHARACTERS IN THE WRITINGS OF KAVITA KANE, PRATIBHA RAI AND CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI

SHORT SYNOPSIS

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by

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Certificate

I hereby declare that the short synopsis *"Depiction of Mythological Women Characters in the Writings of Kavita Kane, Pratibha Rai and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni"* being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English under Faculty of Media Studies and Humanities of Manav Rachna International Institute of Research & Studies, Faridabad during the academic year 2020-2021.

It is a bona fide record of original work carried out under the supervision of Dr Swati Chauhan and has not been submitted in full or part to any other university or institute for degree or diploma. Further, it is certified that short synopsis is plagiarism free and proof has been submitted.

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ABSTRACT

Women are presented in every field, in literature since yore. The depiction of women has got a new benchmark in modern times with modern-day writers. This study provides the view of women mythological characters who were demeaned and subjugated in the patriarchal society. It projects the mythological women who have sacrificed their lives in the hands of patriarchy. This work is true to focus on important characters, fictional as well as real, with the help of fictional and real life-based novels and stories. The depiction of womanhood is not a homogeneous phenomenon. Every writer has their understanding, philosophy and vision of life. This study evaluates the subjugated classes of women by giving them the deserved importance, by evaluating the works of Pratibha Rai, Kavita Kane, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. These writers are raising their voice against the subjugation and they are showing them as powerful personalities because these women truly are the powerful ones. In original writings, these women have been projected wrongly, having little importance. They are raising their voice against the patriarchy and socio-cultural practices that are hindering their freedom. This study aims to praise Sita, Draupadi, Mandodari, Surpanakha, Urmila and more as women with wit.

Keywords- *Patriarchy, Womanhood, Subjugation, Mandodari, Socio-cultural practices, Freedom*

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INTRODUCTION

During the earlier times of Ramayana and Mahabharata, women were all about social stature. The writings have represented social and political issues of the society. Those writings have shown the stereotypical women characters who have always sacrificed themselves to please their men or society. These women have always shown themselves as self-sacrificing patrons for the sale of their families. There were vamps as well but they were supposed to be so for the sake of their homes. Epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata have shown their ladies as weak. Even if they have projected them with strength then also, they are shown having a lower stature than their husbands and brothers and fathers. These were the unequal representation of women characters as they were evaluated only with the mindset of a male. The writers have presented the inner psyche, feelings, experiences, and longings of women from the perspective of men.

Now people are moving forward with every passing second. They are on the verge of modernization. Then also the same mindset follows. Now writers are showing the new concept of womanhood that has taken an all-new dimension. Womanhood is asserting its individuality without being apologetic for being a woman. They are given almost equal status in the patriarchal society. They are shown having their real problems, real aspirations, and dramas. Modern-day representation of women is all about learning, freedom, asking, and having equal rights. These modern writers are doing their best to rebel and protest against the male-dominated society and chauvinistic mentality. These writings are against the unjust that women have faced till now. These are asking for the rightful place of women in today's society.

The authors for the same study have been selected based on feminism and feminist theory, and rightful representation of mythological women.

This study will strive deep into Feminine Sensitivity, Indian Feminism, and Radical Feminism. This would be done to show women who have faced suppression and are still facing the same in different ways. Not only Draupadi, but India has many modern-day Draupadis who are being killed because of self-satisfactory reasons formed by the male dominant society.

INTRODUCTION OF RAMAYANA

It is an Indian Epic that was written in the 5th Century BCE. Ramayana is said to be the oldest epic in World Literature. It is a story about the exile of Rama and then his return. The epic follows Rama who goes on exile for fourteen years along with his wife and his brother to fulfill the last wishes of his father.

Ramayana was composed by Valmiki in Sanskrit. It is said that he had taught the "Ramayana" to Rama's sons when they were living in an Ashram with their mother Sita.

It is said to be a book of Dharma as Rama is considered as an epitome of Dharma and an ideal. It displays Dharma to its peak and dharma that Rama has shunned to express a value system belief. The concept of the same Dharma is narrated well from time to time with the help of various characters. This gives an obvious message that dharma prevails at the end.

Some rewarding academicians have and are still working under the "Ramayana Project" to give a profound understanding of the concept of Ramayana.

Ramayana has around three hundred versions that are known to exist. The oldest is the one written in Sanskrit by Valmiki. The epic poem is not prominent in Indian only but it was transferred to many Asian countries like Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Malaysia, Japan, etc. There are many adaptations of the classic epic poem. There is Tamil Language Ramavataram, Sri Ranganatha Ramayana (Telugu), and many. Every version has something different when it comes to the interpretation of characters and stories.

Many adaptations have interpersonal Sita as the lady who has got everything but not the deserved love. Sita has suffered since her marriage to Rama. Though they were the model of love as a couple but the woman was set apart when she was asked to go through "agni pariksha" only to prove her chastity and purity".

Ramayana shows the women having a stature of "Devi" but the same women have been brought down to mercy because of their counterparts.

INTRODUCTION OF MAHABHARATA

Mahabharata is said to be the national epic of India. It follows the great war that started in age and ended with the beginning of another age. It is written in Sanskrit that has around 100000 stanzas. It is also in a note that it was written some 2500 or 3000 years ago. It focuses on the deeds of the hero and the outcomes faced by the ones who were connected to him. But it misses some points.

Mahabharata, despite projecting the story that followed the war, shows the women characters who have sacrificed themselves in the patriarchal society. Draupadi is such an example who has even faced humility at the hands of her family members. She was harassed by her brothers-in-law in front of her fathers-in-law and great grandfathers-in-law. It shows the Hindu vision of how a woman should lead her life. She should renounce her desires and her self-respect to obey and respect her family members especially males of the family.

It is a story of a great battle that has put brothers against brothers, fathers against uncles. However, all the great men have died in the battle. Only the heirs of Pandu survived who themselves have faced destiny at the end.

The Mahabharata is filled with cosmic significance. The wealth of family, their myths, and stories have led to the events where women characters have lost their chastity and self-worth.

INTRODUCTION OF PRATIBHA RAI AND HER WRITINGS

Pratibha Rai is one of the best-known writers of modern times. She is a name known in every household because of her translated works. She is a professor by profession and a mythological writer, an illustrator who is known for her works based on folklore, fables, and parables. Her works have focused on myths, religion, and mythology.

She was active in field of research. She had a bold commitment to work with Bonda tribe at the time when not even male writer had dared to work with them.

She has always searched and written for social order that is based on love, equality, peace and integration. In fact, she has been, many a times, called a communist by critics as she has written about sex discrimination, equality without caste.

This summarizes the mindset of the writer.

While studying mythology helps in understanding the world better, but Studying mythological women characters helps in providing a profound understanding of the society.

INTRODUCTION OF KAVITA KANE AND HER WRITINGS

Kavita Kane is known for writing about myths. She is a prolific writer who writes mythological fiction. All the books written by her are having fragments of mythology.

She was born in Mumbai and grew up in Delhi, Pune, and Patna. She has written *Karna's Wife*, which was received well critically. *Sita's Sister* is one of the works that she wanted to write earlier. She was always keen on writing about Urmila, Laxman's wife.

According to her, it was not Sita who was the leader of Janak but Urmila. Urmila took the responsibility to look after the palace when Rama, Laxman, and Sita left for the exile of fourteen years. She has taken care of the broken family. Ramayana has only shown her sufferings but for Kavita Kane, Urmila is more about courage and fortitude.

Urmila is the lady with silent strength, grit, and conviction.

Fiction and mythological facts are two different perspectives. So, she sticks back to the original in her stories so the readers must know what the original story is about.

INTRODUCTION OF CHITRA BANERJEE AND HER WRITINGS

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an American Indian writer. She is a teacher of writing, a well not poet and a writer. She has lived mostly in North California and she writes about it, often. Her writings stimulate progressive issues like the rights of women, especially the ones that are concerning sexual violence. She writes about historical fiction, realistic fiction, myth, and fantasy.

Divakaruni's The Palace of Illusions was and is still a best-selling novel over years in India. It is basically the retelling of the epic, The Mahabharata from the point of view of Draupadi. She herself has stepped into the shoes of Draupadi and then has written a male dominant writing with the point of view of a female. According to many critics and readers, it seems as if she has portrayed Draupadi a little complicated, but in fact, she has depicted emotions well with the help of Draupadi's character.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Devdutt Pattanaik, Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana (2013): This is written by Devdutt Pattanaik and published in the year 2013. Devdutt Pattanaik emphasizes that Sita, who has generally emerged as an accommodating character, was certainly a woman of solidarity. From her childhood days and her relationship with her father King Janaka to her exile days in forests to residing alone in Lanka after being kidnapped, and to being a single parent. The book thoughtfully illustrates Sita, accordingly by drawing off the lesser-known aspect of hers to the perusers.

Kavita Kane, Lanka's Princess (2017): This follows is the story from the perspective of Ravan's sister Surpanakha. Surpanakha is repeatedly seen as the driver behind the animosity and hostility among Ravan and Ram which has directed to war. At the juncture when Lakshman cut off Surpanakha's nose, it was her protective brother King Ravan who allocated her retribution. This is Surpanakha's interpretation of Ramayana which will result in the perusers to deem if horrible things are often done by terrible people or are done by people who settle on tragic decisions.

Kavita Kane, Sita's Sister (2014): It is one of the best-known books written by the author. She has made sure to point out Urmila, Laxman's wife, and Sita's sister having greater importance and perspective than only being a wife of Laxman and sister of Sita. She has shown the sufferings of Urmila along with her conviction and confidence while she takes care of the family and palace.

Manini J. Anandani, Mandodari: Queen of Lanka (2018): Mandodari, a wonderful, incredible, and delightful apsara who was hooked to Ravan, is perhaps one of the lesser-known personalities of the Hindu epic Ramayana. Manini J. Anandani's **'Mandodari: Queen of Lanka'** is awakened by Sanghadasa's Jaina transformation of Ramayana, and reviews the epic story from Mandodari's perspective. In this book, Mandodari pertains to her fightings and shortcomings in the path of being hitched to Ravan and the events which resulted in his destruction. The pursuers get a different standpoint of the tale from the evil King's significant other.

Arundhati Roy, The God of The Small Things (1997): The God The Small Things is a novel written by Arundhati Roy. It is the debut novel of the writer. This novel follows the story of two twins and their childhood experiences. This deals with the lives of the twins as their lives were destroyed because of "who should be loved and how and how much". It is a rare combination of beautiful and crafty book that have shown the struggles of women as it is a semi-autobiographical novel in itself.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, The Palace of Illusions (2008): This book is written by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. It is written in a way that it seems an alternate version of Mahabharata with Draupadi's point of view. There are many major elements that makes it easy and interesting for the purpose of analysis.

Women in Indian Mythology: Seeking Order in the Chaotic Interpretations is a conference paper by Shriya Gautam from Oxford University. This paper deals with women from the ages of Ramayana and Mahabharata. She has projected these women as the most mis-understood and mis-interpreted ones. This paper shows that the status of women in Indian society is ever evolving since ages.

Decoding Women in Hindu Mythology (2019), The Asian Age, Namarata Srivastava: This article is written from the perspective of Devdutt Pattanaik. Unlike many people, critics and scholars, he believes that there are empowered women characters in Hindu mythology. While taking on the term, Sati-Savitri, he reveals that sati and Savitri are two contrary characters. He said, "many of us don't understand these stories completely and thus have a false assumption about these ladies. If you read up however, you will find that both sati and Savitri were women who has their own minds and made their life choices independently without any pressure from their father or husband".

DESCRIPTION OF BROAD AREA

Indian Mythology Literature deals with Hindu Mythology. It has included the epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata that are known to every household in India.

This research will strive to analyze the dimensions of mythological women and somewhere modern-day women also with the help of portrayal of women characters in prominent works of Kavita Kane, Pratibha Rai, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.

The research will be comprised of depiction of Mythological Women with the help of writings of Kavita Kane, Pratibha Rai, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The writing will depict Modern-Day Women with the help of the works of the above-mentioned writers. It will be a comparative study of women projected by Kavita Kane, Pratibha Rai and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The research work will be having the following objectives:

1. To conduct a literature review in the field of mythological literature.
2. To evaluate the feminine literature.
3. To analyze womanhood and projection of women in social context of present times.
4. To explore feminism, the individual identity of women, their tendency of rebellion, isolation, and suppression of their thoughts and wills.
5. To analyze feminist sensibility through works of Kavita Kane, Pratibha Rai, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in particular.
6. To create the ground for modern-day women by providing them their due respect.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology that is implied while carrying out this research work are listed below:

1. To apply the descriptive and analytical methods to the research work, the primary, as well as secondary sources that are available in form of criticism, would be employed.

2. Some of the libraries like the Library of Jawahar Lal Nehru University, Library of Delhi University, Delhi Public Library, Mathura Research Institute, and Museums like Government Museum, Mathura.

3. Interviews of the writers as well as other writers who have written about the same theme would be taken into consideration.

4. Interviews with learned scholars would be conducted.

5. The subject would be evaluated from the perspective of womanhood and unheard realities faced by women and women who are empowered in themselves.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF RESEARCH

1. The research is anticipated to assess various themes, artisanship, the technique of the writers mentioned earlier.

2. It is expected to establish feminism and fake feminism with the help of the works of the already mentioned writers.

3. To explore various aspects of feminism in mythology by throwing more light on writings of earlier mentioned writers and their alternate take on the mythological women characters.

4. The portrayal of major mythological women characters along with modern-day, real-life women is expected to be taken into critical discussion.

5. The research work is expected to examine modern Indian society that follows Dharma taught by mythology and treats women likewise.

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